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16 March 2018

Mrs Rebecca Thompson  
Principal  
Serlby Park Academy  
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South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Thompson

### **Short inspection of Serlby Park Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Russell Barr, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Over the last two years, the school has undergone a period of transition. Changes have been made to both school leadership and the academy trust. Pupils and staff have moved into a new purpose-built school building. This provides an inviting and spacious environment in which pupils learn happily together. Pupils are polite and considerate, and their attitudes to learning and conduct are good.

You, the head of the primary school, and your senior leaders provide the school with strong and determined leadership. You have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You use this well to plan for improvement where it is still needed. Leaders, at all levels, provide you with valuable support. They are committed to improving the areas for which they hold responsibility. Pupils' progress and attainment are rising across the different phases of this all-through school.

You have improved attainment in English since the last inspection. In the early years, children's progress in reading and writing has accelerated. Their communication and language skills have also improved and are now above national averages. In key stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading and writing has also improved. Pupils make good progress in English by the end of key stage 4.

Teaching provides pupils with enjoyable learning experiences. Teachers use assessment information to check on pupils' learning and plan work for their different learning needs. Often they provide the most able pupils with more demanding tasks and activities. More of the most able pupils are reaching higher standards in their learning than they did at the time of the last inspection. Sometimes, however, teaching does not move pupils on quickly enough for more pupils to achieve a greater depth to their learning. This is especially true in the primary school.

You have taken effective action to improve the quality of education in the sixth form. Students make good progress on the vast majority of courses available to them. Attainment has risen and is similar to national averages. In the applied qualifications, students' attainment is above national averages.

The academy trust provides you with high-quality support. Academy-trust directors and associate executive principals play a valuable role in making the school effective. You provide the executive-advisory-board members with helpful information about the school's effectiveness. Members confirm this evidence during their own visits to the school. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and know what needs to improve. Members make regular checks on the actions leaders take to improve standards across the school.

You recognise, however, that pupils' progress in reading during key stage 2 has slowed. The school meets the Department for Education definition of a coasting school because of this. Leaders' actions are improving reading but some actions are new. Leaders, therefore, need time to determine whether these actions will be effective in improving pupils' progress further.

Some of the actions your leaders have taken to help disadvantaged pupils make faster progress have been successful. You acknowledge, however, that further action is needed to ensure that more disadvantaged pupils make good progress.

The secondary school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. You manage the obstacles this creates for the key stage 4 curriculum effectively. You acknowledge, however, that information shared with pupils about their career choices is not as well developed as it should be.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Strong safeguarding practices are embedded throughout the school. Your designated teacher for child protection and safeguarding diligently applies procedures to ensure that pupils keep safe in school. The records she maintains are informative and comprehensive. You ensure that staff are thoroughly trained and are confident that they know what action they would take should they have a concern.

You provide pupils with useful information to help them to care for themselves and keep safe. Pupils drew the inspectors' attention to how safe they feel in the school. Most of their responses to Ofsted's survey and the school's own surveys confirmed

this view. Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View also agreed that their children are safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- In 2016 and 2017, pupils had made slow progress in reading by the end of key stage 2. This was especially true for the girls. Leaders have taken action to stop this decline. They have placed a greater emphasis on pupils' reading and have introduced new approaches to the teaching of reading in the primary school. The school's current assessment information indicates that pupils' reading skills are improving quickly. Pupils who read to the inspectors used their phonic and comprehension skills well. Some pupils, however, still do not reach the higher standards they are capable of in their reading.
- Although average, pupils' progress in GCSE English has continued to be slower than in a range of other subjects. Leaders have maintained a sharp focus on English in the secondary curriculum. Some pupils, by the end of key stage 4, make rapid progress and catch up with other pupils nationally. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that more pupils are reaching higher standards in their English than they have done in previous years.
- A few students enter the sixth form with a GCSE grade in English and/or mathematics below a standard pass. Leaders provide opportunities for students to re-take these qualifications, but in English students have not improved as much as they should. A different approach to the teaching of English in the sixth form is now helping students to make faster progress.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding for many disadvantaged pupils. The differences between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and that of other pupils nationally are diminishing. Leaders' records show that disadvantaged pupils will do better in this year's phonics screening checks. By the end of key stage 4, disadvantaged pupils make good progress. At times they reach standards similar to those of other pupils nationally. Leaders are introducing new approaches to eliminate remaining differences.
- Pupils' attendance, especially the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, fell below the national average in 2016 and 2017. The proportion of pupils who were persistently absent also rose during the same period. The new attendance leader has taken urgent and decisive action to rectify this. The procedures adopted are highly effective, and pupils' attendance has rapidly improved. In particular, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is now similar to that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders manage the curriculum offered to pupils at key stage 4 effectively. Pupils have access to a variety of subjects and appropriate qualifications to enable them to pursue the next stage in their learning. They receive some advice and guidance on making their career choices, but leaders recognise that these need to be further developed.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new approaches to accelerating pupils' progress in reading are embedded and more pupils achieve greater depth in their learning
- they maintain a strong emphasis on accelerating disadvantaged pupils' progress and eliminate the remaining differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers
- they provide key stage 4 pupils with high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders, subject leaders and pupil-support leaders. They also met with members of the education advisory body and representatives of the academy trust.

The inspection team observed pupils' learning in several lessons ranging from the early years through to key stage 4. The vast majority of this learning was observed jointly with you and the head of the primary school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. They spoke with pupils informally and met with a group of pupils. An inspector also listened to pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 4 reading.

In addition, inspectors considered a range of documents. Safeguarding practices were also scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the school's website to confirm whether it met the requirements on the publication of information.

Inspectors considered the views of 101 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey Parent View. This included 24 free-text responses, a face-to-face conversation with one parent and a telephone call from another. Inspectors also took into account the staff and pupil surveys.